Theology vol 12.

AN

Expoſtulatory LETTER

TO

Mr. Woolſton

On ACCOUNT of

His late WRITINGS.

[Price Six-Pence.]

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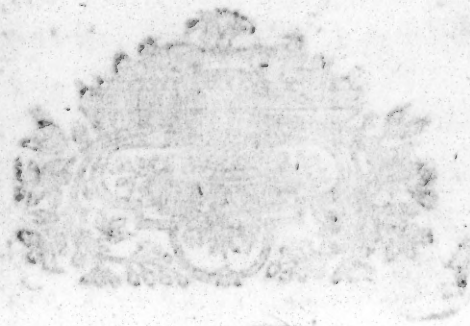
Mr. *Woolſton*,
On Account of
His late WRITINGS.

By a CLERGYMAN in the Country.

A ſoft Anſwer turneth away Wrath; but grievous words ſtir up Anger. Prov. xv. 1.

LONDON:
Printed for J. ROBERTS in *Warwick-Lane.* MDCCXXX.



AN

Expoſtulatory LETTER

TO

Mr. WOOLSTON:

DEAR SIR,

ON the foot of our old Acquaintance and former Friendſhip I venture to trouble you with this Letter, which I deſire you to account and take as an Inſtance of a ſincere Love and Reſpect I bear to you, founded on an experimental Know-

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ledge of your Learning as well as moral and ſocial Virtues.

YOU perceive your ſelf engaged in a conſiderable Controverſy; In which (to be ſure) as a Chriſtian, a Scholar, and an Engliſhman, you have a right to be heard: And howſoever abſurd and unreaſonable your Scheme may appear to the Eccleſiaſtical and Civil Powers; yet I could have wiſhed for the ſake of Truth, that you had been treated only as a Perſon whom they thought to be *miſtaken*, and that proper Allowances had been made for your ſingular way of Writing on the foot of *Ridiculum acri fortius & melius.*

I OWN therefore, had I engaged in the Controverſy with you, I ſhould have

have kept exactly to the Gospel-Rule, to *bear with you in Love*, and endeavoured to shew the much greater Absurdity that must follow the Allegorical Scheme; to which you could set no Bounds, and in which you could go by no certain Rule. However, as I am not entering the Lists with you, nor intend here to examine the merits of the Cause, I have only two Requests to make to you, which for the Credit and Honour of the Christian Religion I hope you will not deny me.

And the first is: That as you have rightly enough hit upon and exposed the *Foible* of some of your most considerable Adversaries, when they call out to the Civil Power for help, you would not any more lay open that

Weakneſs; but honourably paſs it by and forgive it, as a Perſon of heroick Valour and Courage would, who hath his Enemy under his Feet and could deſtroy him. See *Prov.* xix. 11.

My next Requeſt is; That whereas many and great ſtumbling Blocks have been laid in the way of licentious, wavering and ſceptical Perſons by this Controverſy, who (how untruly ſoever) judge that you are no Friend to the Chriſtian Religion, you would thereupon immediately reſolve to addreſs your ſelf to the Deiſts and Infidels of the Age in a ſerious and grave Manner, exhorting them not to *take* offence tho' it may ſeem to be *given*. I am fully ſatisfied in my own mind that you ARE, and in earneſt when you ſay you ARE, *no*

Friend

Friend to Infidelity, but a *Believer of the Religion of Chriſt, though you have ſome different Conceptions from other Men about it*; that your deſign is to *advance the Glory of God, and the Truth of Chriſtianity*; That you abhor the Charge of *labouring induſtriouſly to root out all ſenſe of Virtue and Religion among us*: On the Contrary, that you ſhould be *troubled to hear of any Gentleman, old or young, who has given a greater looſe to his Luſts and Paſſions, ſince he read your Books.*

And I am the more confirmed in my Opinion that theſe Declarations are real and ſincere, not only as gathered from ſome excellent Writings of your own; but alſo becauſe your Character in the Univerſity was always clear and good; where you

you have ſo frequently and with a general Applauſe preſſed and enforced *Chriſtian Morals* from the Pulpit; whilſt at the ſame time by your Life and Example, you ſhewed your ſelf a Friend to Virtue and Univerſal Benevolence; and thereby (as far as your own Example and Influence could go) anticipated that very Objection, which you now ſo unkindly faſten upon the whole Body of the Clergy without Exception, as if we were ALL of us *Make-bates in Cities and Families, the Trumpeters of Sedition and Rebellion, and the very Peſt and Bane of Human Society.*

I CANNOT forbear hoping, that I am in the right, when I ſay that theſe ſevere Expreſſions (how true ſoever they may be found in *ſome*) ſhould have been guarded with conſiderable

ſiderable Limitations and Reſtrictions: But be that as it will, and let the Expreſſions ſtand upon the Foot of your own Meaning and Experience; this one thing I am certain of, that the Author of our Religion never taught or encouraged ſuch vile Practiſes either by his *Example* or *Precepts*.

But on the contrary, it were eaſy to ſhew (and I am ready to prove it by an Induction of Particulars), that the Chriſtian Religion is not only the *beſt*, but the *beſt natured* Inſtitution in the World; as it ſo admirably conſults the Welfare and Happineſs of Mankind even in this World, if Men would but think fit to practiſe and be governed by her pacifick Principles of univerſal Love and Benevolence.

NAY, I would go ſomething farther ſtill, and ſay, that the Syſtem and Religion of Jeſus Chriſt, is (excluſive of the Allegorical Scheme) a plain and intelligible Syſtem, eaſy to be underſtood and learnt, and perfectly agreeable to the *Common Reaſon* and the *Common Senſe* of Mankind; which (whatever ſome may think) is the *beſt Reaſon* and the *beſt Senſe* in the World.

BUT alaſs! What ſhall we, what can we ſay to the corrupt Paſſions and Humours of Mankind? What can be ſaid or offered to ſuch as will not hear Reaſon, whilſt they are deafened by the Clamour and Importunity of their Paſſions. But ſo it is; we live in an Age of great Licentiouſneſs, Infidelity

fidelity and Prophaneneſs; countenanced too much by the Authority and Examples of ſuch, as abſurdly raiſe Objections againſt Chriſtianity, which apparently ariſe and proceed from the want of it.

WHAT now is to be ſaid to theſe things? Doth my Friend really think, that Chriſtianity is to be made to appear lovely and amiable to Jews and Infidels by introducing an Allegorical Scheme, which every one hath a right to form, as his Imagination leads him, and entirely dropping the Letter of a plain Hiſtory; only becauſe there are ſome Difficulties owing to our Ignorance of the Manners and Cuſtoms and dialect of a diſtant age?

OR doth he think that wicked Men, who are apt to juſtify their Vices by their Infidelity, will leave thoſe Vices and turn Believers upon a new Scheme of Chriſtianity ſupported by Allegories and Fables?

OR laſtly; Doth he think, that Deiſm and Infidelity will fly before him, in proportion to the unkind Reproaches he beſtows upon what he is pleaſed to call *an hired mercenary Prieſthood, kept in pay only to ſupport the Literal Scheme, rather by calling in the Aſſiſtance of the Civil Power, than by the Arguments of Reaſon?* You may believe and think all this if you pleaſe; neither ſhall I be angry, or (if it were in my power) endeavour to hurt you for really thinking ſo.

BUT (far from deſpiſing Yours or other People's Judgments) I am apt to think you will find few or none of your mind, that can connect or reconcile ſuch ſeeming Contradictions; neither can I hear of any Diſciples you have made (even amongſt the Laity) to your Allegorical Scheme.

THERE are doubtleſs Many, who admire and applaud your Wit and Learning; and that ludicrous Satyr ſo frequently interſperſed in your Writings, is but too grateful to the corrupt Paſſions and Humours of Mankind; eſpecially when the Butt at which the Arrows are darted is ſo eaſy and viſible a Mark for the Envy and Hatred of thoſe, who are no Friends to Virtue, and Enemies to the Clergy: But then I ſhould think, a Man of

your Penetration ſhould eaſily diſcern, that ſuch Perſons know very well how to chuſe and how to refuſe; how to ſeparate the *Scheme* from the *Satyr*; becauſe by their Principles they love the *One* and hate the *Other*.

AND are you then indeed aware of what you are doing? and are you ſure that the ludicrous manner in which you treat the Subject, and by which you chiefly defend your Scheme, will derive no real Scandal to the Chriſtian Religion in general, nor *give* any real Offence to nominal Profeſſors, who are ſo apt to *take* it? It were well if ſuch Perſwaſions were rightly grounded, and no wiſe man would be uneaſy or angry with you for endeavouring to aſſert and maintain, what, after your beſt Enquiries and moſt ſe-

rious

rious Examination appears to You to be *Truth*.

BUT then, my good Friend, be pleaſed to remember that you *may* be in an Error, you *may* be miſtaken, not only in the *Foundation* of your Argument, but in the Method of treating it; and then what a world of Miſchief are you doing by allegorizing away the Letter of the Chriſtian Law, to the great Comfort and Support of Prophane and Atheiſtical Perſons.

WHEREAS, as Matters now ſtand *res eſt integra*, no *Harm* is done, tho' you would take away all the *Good* intended; for no Man's real Good and Intereſt is abridged, no Man's Liberty, Reaſon or Right, as a Man, is in any ſort hurt, or ſo much as in danger by

by the Christian Institution literally understood.

IT were easy here to enlarge and to lay this Argument in a fuller and stronger Light; but intending this only as a short and friendly Letter of Exhortation to you, I shall only add what I take to be at least *Argumentum ad hominem.*

YOU complain (and that rightly enough) in your Title-page, and in the Words of *Lactantius*; *Res Religionis non Verberibus sed Verbis est peragenda*; and accordingly blame with Severity your Adversaries for calling in Help from the Civil Powers, and making them *Parties* in the Controversy.

I HAVE already granted that Step to have been *wrong*: But (my Friend) what do you do leſs in the whole Courſe of your laſt Book? Do you not lay about you with hard Names and unkind Reproaches, fixed upon the whole Body of the Clergy, calling out to the *Populace* thereby for Help; nay even to the *Civil Powers to curb and keep in awe an Hireling Prieſthood*, that now ſtands in your way of allegoriſing the Scriptures?

COULD not you be content to ſupport your allegorical Scheme, as well as you could, by Authorities and Arguments; but you muſt raiſe a Mob upon your Adverſaries, the Supporters of the literal Scheme, repreſenting them as the conſtant *Diſturbers of the publick Peace*, and only *Prieſts*

for

for Hire. You do not ſee the Weakneſs of this Proceeding in yourſelf, tho' you diſcerned it ſo readily in others: Whereas it is in truth little better Treatment than what you dreaded yourſelf: *To be dreſſed up as it were in a Bear's Skin, to excite the mercileſs Mob to worry and to deſtroy us.*

No, no, my Friend, Theſe Methods give no promiſing Signs of a good Cauſe, nor are they agreable to that Meekneſs and Gentleneſs which becomes both Miniſters and Diſciples of Chriſt. Let me therefore now once again intreat you to conſider what you are doing: And I hope you will reſolve not to do *that* for Popularity and Applauſe, which you would not chuſe to do, but for that Applauſe; That you will not do *that*

whilſt

whilſt *living*, which you would not chooſe to do when you are *dying*.

PARDON me if I repeat the Requeſt I before made to you; That you would ſeriouſly addreſs yourſelf to the Deiſts and Infidels of the Age, that as much Offence as poſſible may be removed, that the Cauſe of Virtue, the Honour and Intereſt of the Chriſtian Religion, through Offences both *taken* and *given*, may not ſink and die away in a looſe and licentious Age. For this, I verily believe, would be a Trouble to You, as well as to

Your moſt affectionate

Friend and Servant.

In the Preſs, and ſpeedily will be Publiſh'd,

A Vindication of our SAVIOUR'S MIRACLES, in Anſwer to Mr. *Woolſton*'s Five laſt Diſcourſes. By T. RAY. Printed for *J. Roberts* in *Warwick-lane*.

Where may be had, by the ſame Author, the Second Edition Corrected and Amended, of

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